AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An automatic tube-type specimen container supply apparatus comprising:

a container storing box having a plurality of side walls, an insertion port and a bottom, said bottom of said container storing box including a tapered surface having a container collecting position in a lowest part thereof to collect a plurality of tube-type specimen containers;

a container individually-sending mechanism configured to lift up said specimen containers, which are collected in said container collecting position, one by one along one of said side walls;

an outlet formed in the one of said side walls to discharge the specimen containers, which are lifted up by the container individually-sending mechanism, outside the container storing box; and

a container carry-out mechanism including a carry-out conveyor to carry out the specimen containers discharged through the outlet,

wherein the container individually-sending mechanism includes a drive source, a lifting plate which is driven up and down by the drive source, and an auxiliary plate which is mounted on one side of and adjacent the lifting plate, ~~and~~ the drive source driving only the lifting plate such that the auxiliary plate is slidable up and down ~~relative to~~ only in accordance with movement of the lifting plate, the lifting plate has a top end with a tapered surface having a space to place only one specimen container and descending toward an outside of the container storing box, and the auxiliary plate has a top end with a tapered surface that descends toward an outside

of the container storing box, the lifting plate and the auxiliary plate being constructed such that the top end of the auxiliary plate is flush with that of the lifting plate when the lifting plate descends and is located in a lower level than that of the lifting plate when the lifting plate ascends.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The automatic tube-type specimen container supply apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the container storing box has a two-layer structure including a first partition plate and a second partition plate that are angled downwardly with respect to a horizontal plane, the first partition plate having a tapered surface that descends from one side to another side, the second partition plate having a tapered surface that descends in a direction opposite to the tapered surface of the first partition plate, and a path is formed between the first and second partition plates to allow one specimen container to pass therethrough.

4. (Canceled)